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ABSTRACT

Organized in nine sections, this paper traces the development of Israeli television since 1968, the year when television was first presented to a night-time viewing public, and examines the programs preferred by the Israeli public. The paper focuses on the growth of interest in TV; television viewing and the ongoing surveys; an internal analysis of TV programming, 1968-1973; audience preferences and interest; television programming and the lowest common denominator; foreign entertainment programming; and program preference by default. The paper concludes that the combination of the Israeli audience's hunger for any kind of programming and the limitations of a single channel would have artificially boosted the ratings of whatever program appeared; that for some of the acquired programs which drew lower ratings, the results could be attributed to the plot, characters, content, or a poor time slot placement; and that with no absolute consistency of audience reactions, it was a difficult matter for those in TV to select, present, and maintain a program schedule which would satisfy a majority of the television audience. (DF)

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# The Relationship Between Audience Preferences and Israeli General Television Programming The Early Years:1968-1973

by

Harvey Gotliffe, Ph.D.

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When Israeli general television came into being, it was envisioned as a unique system, which would satisfy the lofty objectives set forth in the Broadcasting Authority Law of 1965, and amended in 1968, the year when television was first presented to a night time viewing public. Those objectives reinforced the high ideals of the nation by committing the broadcast media to offer programming which would, among other things, reflect 'the life, struggle and creative effort of the State,' strengthen 'the ties with, and deepening knowledge of, the Jewish heritage and its values,' and 'promote Hebrew and Israeli creative endeavor.'[1]

Although Israeli television was ostensibly created to satisfy the objectives by offering educational, informational and entertainment fare, the primary purpose of private national systems in other countries, is simply to make a profit for the owners. The amount of revenue generated is directly related to the size of the viewing audience, for as more people watch a specific program, a larger amount can be charged for commercial time sold to advertisers. Overnight and weekly ratings or surveys provide estimated audience sizes for many channels at the same time, and these results not only become the basis for determining the cost for advertising time, but they are also used

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to decide which programs to retain and which to drop. With intense competition between different television channels covering the same geographical area, in many instances, programs were withdrawn and replaced immediately, if they did not draw a large enough audience to make a desirable profit.

Unlike other countries, general television occupied Israel's only channel at night, and the programs were totally void of any advertising. Broadcasting, which began in May 1968 with an irregular and infrequent schedule, grew to three nights a week by October, and to a full week's schedule in November 1969. The actual programming time was quite limited, with Arabic and children's materials beginning at 5:30 or 6 P.M., it wasn't until 7:30 that Hebrew-language adult and family programs came on the air, and that for no more than three hours each night.

With such a compact schedule, it was hoped that the results of any audience surveys could be used to determine not only viewing habits, but the depth of interest in particular programs. These results might enable those responsible for planning and implementing, to make the medium more responsive to the diverse Israeli viewing audience. Itzhauk Shimoni, the only Head of Hebrew Programs during the first five years, realized the difficulties of such an undertaking, stating, 'You can not, within two and one half or three hours,

really supply all of the demands of everyone who has a television set in this country.'[2] His feelings on the dilemma were echoed by Yeshayahu Tadmor, the sixth Director of Television, who admitted 'With only one channel, every program is a source of discord between us and the public.'[3]

## The Growth of Interest In Television

Although television wasn't introduced until 1968, there were measurable numbers of receivers as early as 1963, when the only programs to view were those coming from Arab countries across Israel's borders. When the first internal telecast took place on the twentieth anniversary of the State of Israel in May 1968, general television operated out of inadequate facilities, with a limited budget, and insufficiently trained personnel. It had been rushed into existence, primarily to reach the large, hostile Arab population residing within the expanded territories under Israel's jurisdiction, as a result of the June 1967 war. The inflated estimates of television receivers in both Jewish and Arab households at that time, may have contributed to the chaotic and hurried introduction of the medium.

The growth of set ownership more than tripled in 1968, and then doubled in 1969, when programs were first broadcast on a regular basis. In 1970, the first year of a seven-days-a-week schedule, there was another dynamic increase in set

ownership, followed by another after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when the amount of viewing time doubled, and the number of television receiver licenses reached 440,000.[4]

By 1973, 74.4 percent of all families in Israel owned a television receiver, with 77.6 percent of those living in a town or urban settlement possessing a set, as compared to 52.8 percent of those in rural locations. The heaviest ownership was reported in Haifa at 84.1 percent, followed by Tel Aviv at 80.6 percent, and 60.3 percent in Jerusalem.[5] Among the heads of all Jewish families, those who were born in Europe and America and then immigrated to Israel, owned more television sets (82.0 percent), than either native-born Israelis (77.2 percent), or those who immigrated from Africa and Asia (74.7 percent).[6] While these percentages were not significantly different, they did indicate that those who had an opportunity for greater previous exposure to the medium, were more likely to own a receiver, than those who had less exposure.

## Television Viewing and the Ongoing Surveys

In early 1969, at the start of regularly scheduled programming, television viewing did not dominate the media scene, when only 38 percent of all Jews over fourteen years of age watched television at all. The largest viewing group

were the fourteen to seventeen year old males and the thirty to forty-four year old females, while both men and women over sixty years of age, constituted the group doing the least amount of viewing.[7]

Those who watched television, did so in greater numbers after 9 P.M., and this was universal for both men and women, regardless of the age group. With television being a new medium, and just over 200 thousand receivers in the country, the impact had been felt, but it was not as great as it would soon be.

In December 1970, the Central Bureau of Statistics began a series of current surveys on both radio listening and television viewing for the Israel Broadcasting Authority. These surveys made it possible to follow audience viewing habits and preferences through June 1973, afterwhich they were discontinued until September 1974. Michal Caspi, who was in charge of the IBA Survey, noted that a base sample of 1000 was used, which was determined by the Methodological Department of the Bureau of Statistics. Samples were altered for every survey to best reflect the current population segmentation by age, sex and education, and of those fourteen years of age and older.[8]

By the first quarter of 1971, television viewers had grown to 76.1 percent of the population, with 58.3 percent watching at home, as opposed to 18.4 percent in 1969.[9] When there were fewer receivers, television viewing had served as a social event, where families and individuals visited those select few who had acquired a relatively expensive television set. As more and more receivers were bought, there was less viewing done outside of the home.

During the week, the heaviest viewing took place between 8:30 and 10 P.M., with a considerable drop in the total audience on Friday night, which reflected the abstention from television on the Sabbath by the religious members of society. From the January to March 1971 period through the same period in 1973, there was a consistent audience of at least 84 percent of the population during each period.

The greatest portion of Israeli viewers spent either from one to two hours per night in front of the set, or from two to three hours, during each survey period. While these figures are comparatively fewer in time than those of viewers in other countries, it must be remembered that Israeli general television was broadcast in Hebrew to a fourteen year and older Jewish audience for less than four hours nightly. Those Jews who watched even three hours or more, probably not only watched

adult and family programming in Hebrew, but also children's programs in Hebrew, as well as Arabic-language television.[10]

An Interval Analysis of Television Programming, 1968-1973

To better understand the flow and emphasis of the various categories of programming, an interval analysis was made every six months, during the first five years of the regular schedule, beginning with the week of 1 November 1968. All Hebrew-language adult and family programs which were shown during the eleven interval weeks of the study, were analyzed to determine both program category, and whether the materials had been produced internally within Israel, or had been acquired outside. As shown in Table 1, Entertainment programs filled the most hours, averaging over 46 percent of the total evening viewing time, and only 18.1 percent of them were produced in Israel. The majority were produced in the United States(52.6 percent), and the remaining 28.5 percent were acquired elsewhere, primarily in Great Britain.

Audience Preferences and Interest

The audience surveys conducted regularly for the IBA during the December 1970 through June 1973 periods, not only provided overall viewing data, but also supplied general television with information on viewing habits related to

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Table 1

HEBREW-LANGUAGE ADULT/FAMILY PROGRAMMING BY PRODUCTION SOURCE
NOVEMBER 1968 - NOVEMBER 1973 (AT SIX-MONTH INTERVALS)

| | Israeli-Produced | | | | U.S. Produced | | | | Other Produced | | | | Totals | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program Category | No. of Shows | Total Hours | Ave. Show Time | % of Total Time | No. of Shows | Total Hours | Ave. Show Time | % of Total Time | No. of Shows | Total Hours | Ave. Show Time | % of Total Time | No. of Shows | Total Hours | Ave. Show Time | % of Total Time |
| Entertainment | 26 | 15:26 | 35.6 | 18.1 | 52 | 45:37 | 52.6 | 53.4 | 30 | 24:18 | 48.6 | 28.5 | 108 | 85:21 | 47.4 | 100.0 |
| News | 152 | 45:00 | 17.8 | 100.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 152 | 45:00 | 17.8 | 100.0 |
| Education, Information, Science | 37 | 16:23 | 26.6 | 58.7 | 14 | 10:11 | 43.6 | 36.5 | 3 | 1:20 | 26.7 | 4.8 | 54 | 27:54 | 31.0 | 100.0 |
| Drama, Culture, Music | 9 | 5:40 | 37.8 | 50.7 | 2 | 1:45 | 52.5 | 15.7 | 5 | 3:45 | 45.0 | 33.6 | 16 | 11:10 | 41.8 | 100.0 |
| Religion | 30 | 13:38 | 27.3 | 100.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 30 | 13:38 | 27.3 | 100.0 |
| Interval Weeks Ave. Percent of Time | | | | 52.5 | | | | 31.4 | | | | 16.1 | | | | 100.0 |

specific programs. The acquired programs, which had far outnumbered the Israeli-produced Entertainment materials during the first five years, also accounted for three of the four programs which ran for the entire two-and-a-half years of the survey span(See Table 2).

Yet, of those four, long-running programs, the 'Israel Entertainment' show scored a higher audience preference in each survey period. Three other locally-produced shows, 'He and She', 'Welcome' and "Not Everything Gets By' received decent ratings, but were not broadcast long enough to establish themselves on the viewing scene.

Survey interviewees were not only asked what programs they had viewed, but also whether they 'rarely', 'sometimes', or 'always' found interest in each program. Three times during the surveys, over 70 percent of the audience found interest in 'Israeli Entertainment', a figure rarely reached by most acquired Entertainment programs. The one acquired program which most closely resembled the Israeli show, 'Entertainment from Abroad', scored overall preferences of 80 percent or better, but never achieved a comparable interest rating, with two such ratings shown to be less than 50 percent.

The strong preferences for the 'Movie of the Week', which was one of the highest rated, long-running shows, was achieved even though some of the feature films shown from

Table 2

TELEVISION VIEWING PREFERENCES OF SELECTED ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING
DECEMBER 1970 - JANUARY 1971 TO APRIL - JUNE 1973

| Acquired Programs | Dec. 1970 - Jan. 1971 | | January - Mar. 1971 [1] | | Apr.- June 1971 | July - Sept. 1971 | | Nov.- Dec. 1971 | January - Mar. 1972 [1] | | Apr.- June 1972 | July - Sept. 1972 [1] | | October - Dec. 1972 [1] | | Jan.- Mar. 1973 | April - June 1973 [1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Interested | Viewed | Viewed | Interested |
| Movie of Week | 85.6 | 73.3 | 86.4 | 73.9 | 81.7 | 82.5 | 55.2 | 83.9 | 84.3 | 51.0 | 80.8 | 87.1 | 53.5 | 82 | 43 | 82.7 | 88.7 | 57.7 |
| Entertainment from Abroad | 81.6 | 66.2 | 81.2 | 65.1 | 80.1 | 84.5 | 59.7 | 80.2 | 80.8 | 48.8 | 80.9 | 84.7 | 52.0 | 86 | 48 | 86.8 | 88.0 | 62.6 |
| Family Affair | 84.2 | 70.9 | 84.3 | 72.1 | 80.5 | 84.8 | 65.9 | 80.4 | 80.5 | 60.5 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Storefront Lawyers [2] | -- | -- | -- | -- | 74.9 | 80.0 | 61.0 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Dr. Welby | 74.4 | 58.1 | 75.5 | 60.8 | 74.9 | 78.3 | 59.7 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Run for Your Life | -- | -- | -- | -- | 75.5 | 75.6 | 59.3 | -- | -- | -- | 55.8 | 78.6 | 66.7 | 84 | 71 | -- | -- | -- |
| Bewitched | 73.8 | 51.8 | 75.3 | 55.5 | 73.1 | 79.2 | 52.9 | 76.6 | 79.9 | 56.1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| The Prisoner | 73.2 | 49.7 | 75.1 | 39.4 | 72.9 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Match of the Week | 61.3 | 40.4 | 58.3 | 38.2 | 55.6 | 60.3 | 37.5 | 69.1 | 54.9 | 39.6 | 52.4 | 64.9 | 44.3 | 59 | 37 | 65.7 | 63.0 | 43.4 |
| Friday Movie [3] | -- | -- | -- | -- | 65.1 | 81.3 | 54.6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| The Saint | -- | -- | -- | -- | 76.7 | 84.7 | 67.0 | 86.5 | 86.5 | 68.4 | 87.6 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Ironside | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 75.1 | 55.7 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 68.4 | 86.3 | 85.8 | 70.2 | 88 | 73 | 85.1 | 85.5 | 69.0 |
| Arnie | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 55.4 | 63.6 | 38.0 | 73 | 39 | -- | -- | -- |
| The Persuaders | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 83.0 | 62.0 | 86 | 61 | -- | -- | -- |
| Hawaii Five-O | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 79.7 | 85.1 | 69.5 | 87 | 73 | 86.6 | 92.4 | 80.6 |
| Brady Bunch | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 43.0 | 30.4 | 53 | 37 | -- | -- | -- |
| Julia | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 71.4 | 80.3 | 58.7 |
| Partridge Family | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 28.4 | 22.1 |
| Israeli-Produced Programs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Israel Entertainment | 87.1 | 70.7 | 86.4 | 72.9 | 86.2 | 85.6 | 65.9 | 86.5 | 86.0 | 56.4 | 85.5 | 86.2 | 57.2 | 89 | 56 | 91.0 | 92.0 | 70.2 |
| Welcome | 70.6 | 50.9 | 76.5 | 61.8 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Not Everything Gets By | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 60.8 | 27.3 | 12.1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| He and She | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 63 | 38 | -- | -- | -- |

[1] To those who viewed, almost always found interest in the program.

[2] All three programs measured together for these periods.

[3] Percent of those who watched on Friday night, approximately 75 percent of weekday audience.

Source: Surveys of Radio Listening and Television Viewing, December 1970 to June 1973. Prepared for the Israel Broadcasting Autority by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

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the different countries were far from being classics. The fourth program, the sports show 'Match of the Week', featured European soccer matches. Its longevity can not be attributed to its ratings, which were amongst the poorest both for audience preference and interest. Rather, it endured as the one continuous sports program aimed at satisfying that segment of the total viewing audience with a desire for sports, much the same as some discussion and talk shows lasted with comparably small audiences.

Walter Eytan, Chairman of the Israel Broadcasting Authority during the early years, commended television for being responsive to the diverse audience with a wide array of interests. 'With two-and-a-half hours of time(each night), you have to squeeze in every conceivable thing. I think the juggling they do with programming is fantastic.'[11] Thus ratings, though useful, could not be the sole criterion for program selection. Arnon Zuckerman, who became Television Director in 1973, reaffirmed this when he said that although the ongoing surveys had an influence on him, 'We are getting reactions not only from surveys. We get reactions from letters...from critics... from people at the station.'[12]

While the long-running survey provided the IBA with a continuous, comprehensive set of data to be used as part of the basis for program scheduling, the delay in receipt of this

information possibly hindered the evaluation and selection process. By the time information was available, a poorly received program had been shown several more times. Ari Avnerre, Counsellor to the Director General of the IBA, recalled one instance where the 'time consuming, prolonged process...was of no practical use as far as immediate programming was concerned. We bought twenty-six episodes of a crime series in French. By the time they told us that the public didn't like it, we were down to the twenty-fourth episode.'[13]

Sir Hugh Greene, former Head of the British Broadcasting Corporation concurred, recommending to the Israeli television system that 'an efficient and speedy research, which measures both the number of viewers and listeners and the degree of their satisfaction with individual programmes, is an essential tool of programme planning. The system used at present is so cumbersome and slow, as to be practically useless.'[14]

Television Programming and the Lowest Common Denominator

In television systems which have been dominated by commercial interests, the oft quoted axiom has persisted that for programming to be a financial success, it must be accepted by as large an audience as possible. Therefore, programming has

been produced which appeals to the lowest common denominator, i.e., those with the least education. In theory, if that segment of the audience understands the program, the better-educated segments would also be able to. Theorists in the United States have also pointed out that the least educated are the most likely to watch more hours of television. Not only are productions created for that audience, but with less discretionary income to spend for other activities than the more educated and higher income population, the less educated spend more time in front of a free medium like television. In Israel, however, that symbiotic relationship between education and set ownership did not prevail in 1973. There was a noticeably higher percent of receiver ownership in those families whose head had a higher education, than in households whose family head had less years of schooling.

Yet, there was a feeling among some in television, that supported the comments of Shmuel Almor, who served both as Director of the IBA and of Television. He thought 'if there is only one channel, it was necessary to cater to the maximum viewers. I think this is a practical point of view.'[15]

Foreign Entertainment Programming

In the surveys conducted through the end of 1971, several Entertainment programs received an audience viewing preference of over 75 percent, besides those already discussed. 'Family Affair' not only scored over 80 percent in preference during every survey, but also achieved an interest rating of over 70 percent during two periods. The interest subsequently dropped into the low 60 percent rating in 1972, just before it was left off the schedule. This may have been due to an Israeli audience which no longer appreciated or was able to relate to an American program about a 'highly paid consulting engineer, (who) maintained an elegant apartment off Fifth Avenue in Manhattan and had his domestic needs cared for by a very English gentleman's gentleman, Mr. French, (and) into this life of indpendence came three young orphans.'[16]

In those early survey periods, another American family series 'Bewitched' held onto three-fourths of the viewing audience, but only half of the audience was always interested in watching it. Even with that minimal interest, it remained on the schedule through March 1972, until its Sunday 7:30 P.M. time slot was filled by 'Arnie', still another American import, which was only watched by 55.4 percent of all television viewers during the first survey in which it appeared. Two survey periods later, in October to December 1972, 'Arnie' had garnered

73 percent of the audience, but only 39 percent of them were always interested in the program. It was moved to the 8 P.M. slot, and then replaced by another American family series 'Julia', which received 80.3 percent viewer preference in the April to June 1973 survey period, but only a 58.7 percent interest rating.

Thus, this early Sunday evening time slot became the domain of American family series shows, and as the interest waned for one show, it was replaced by another. The Israeli audience, which was first exposed to the bachelor father in the 'Family Affair', then became acquainted with a 'loading dock foreman' who was forced into a 'sudden shift from blue-collar worker to white-collar executive' in 'Arnie'.[17] When 'Arnie' left, 'Julia' arrived, and general television viewers could commiserate with the problems of 'an independent (black) woman, a young widowed nurse whose husband had been killed in Vietnam (who) moved to Los Angeles and found a job in the medical office of Astrospace Industries.'[18] Of all of the programs, 'Julia' had the story line which Israeli audiences could most readily relate to, since many families had experienced the loss of a relative or friend by war. The fact that 'Bewitched' had cost only $75 per episode, and the other two only $100 for each program, had to be a consideration for those involved in program selection.

Two other American-produced family series fared poorly as 'The Brady Bunch' was preferred by only 43 percent of the viewers during its first period, and then by 53 percent in the following survey. Even with that audience increase, only 37 percent of the audience was always interested in seeing the program. However, those low interest ratings were nearly double the interest shown in 'The Partridge Family' program, which scored an abysmal 22.1 percent and only attracted 28.4 percent of all viewers.

The time slots for each program were not conducive for higher ratings with 'The Brady Bunch' placed at 6:05 P.M. on Wednesdays, and 'The Partridge Family' shown on Friday afternoon at 3 P.M. when activity centered on ending the work week and preparing for the Sabbath, Not only was the time placement detrimental, but the content of both programs may have been considered alien to most Israeli viewers. 'The Brady Bunch' concerned a 'widow with three daughters who married a widower with three sons; a nutty housekeeper...the family cat and a shaggy dog (and) all of the shining faces lived in a four-bedroom, two-bathroom house in the Los Angeles suburbs.'[19]

That family situation, while contrived and unusual, was challenged for incredulity by 'The Partridge Family', which brought Israeli viewers 'a widowed suburban mother with a

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household of rambunctious kids (who) take part in an impromptu recording session...the record became a smash hit, and the Partridges were soon off in a wildly painted old school bus to perform around the country.'[20]

While the living conditions of those involved in these two programs could not be considered akin to normal Israeli lifestyles, the fact that one of their main characters, as well as the lead in 'Julia', was a widow, could have been a factor in program selection. In Israel, as mentioned before, wars and confrontations have turned too many wives into widows, and these programs could have possibly gained empathy from their intended audiences. Once again, the most realistic selection factor had to be the low price, for 'The Brady Bunch' cost only $60 per episode, and could be easily and inexpensively used to fill a time slot.

The dramatic series shows, especially the detective-action programs, attracted the admiration of those working in television, as well as the attention of the viewers. Two of the most popular were imported from England -- 'The Saint' and 'The Persuaders'. Starting with the April to June 1971 survey, 'The Saint' steadily gained popularity. In the November through December 1971 survey period, it tied 'Israeli Entertainment' for the number one entertainment preference rating, and from January

through June 1972, it was the most popular entertainment program. 'The Persuaders' also did well during two survey periods, as it accumulated 83 percent and 86 percent respectively of the audience. The high ratings for both programs could possibly be attributed to the nature of their content, which offered viewers an escape from the reality of their daily lives.

American-produced dramatic series had been ensconced in the general television schedule from the start. During the first two survey periods, 'Storefront Lawyers', 'Dr. Marcus Welby' and 'Run for Your Life' had alternated during the same Sunday at 9:05 P.M. time slot, and had been rated together and viewed by about 75 percent of the television audience.

The two highest rated American-produced dramatic series programs were 'Ironside' and 'Hawaii Five-O'. After being rated during its initial survey period from July to September 1971 at just 75 percent, the preference for 'Ironside' never fell below 84.5 percent. It acheived an 88 percent preference rating with 73 percent of the viewers always interested in it during the October to December 1972 period. The high attention given to the program caused some problems elsewhere with non-media related activities. On one kibbutz, where television was permitted, it was noted that 'Attendance at our Saturday night

meeting is way down because 'Ironside' comes on at 9 o'clock, when the meeting begins.'[21]

'Hawaii Five-O' took an even more phenomenal hold of the general television audience. Its popularity soared as it reached 92.4 percent of the viewers from April to June 1973, of which 80.6 percent were always interested in seeing the program. The popularity of both detective series possibly could be based on several factors. Both provided the Israeli audience with fast-moving, escapist action, which took place in exotic settings, with 'Hawaii Five-O' on an island paradise, and 'Ironside' in the heart of San Francisco. Each of the programs appeared at an ideal time, with 'Ironside' at 9 P.M. on Saturday night, after the Sabbath was over, and directly after the well-received 'Mabat' news show. 'Hawaii Five-O' was put into the Thursday 8:50 P.M. slot, also after 'Mabat', and was the last pure entertainment show before the audiences would be diminished for the Sabbath night programming on Friday. 'Hawaii Five-O', although extremely popular, was also the most expensive acquired dramatic series program, costing $250 per episode, however, its popularity seemed to justify the expense.

'Economics was a prime factor' in program selection, according to another former Director of Television, Haggai Pinsker.[22] These inexpensive acquired programs, would cost up to $10,000 per show

to produce in Israel's own inadequate facilities. The prices were preset for acquired materials, varying according to the number of receivers in a country, and if commercials were presented. Israel, with few receivers and no advertising, turned to readily available and inexpensive foreign fare, as the easiest way to fill a growing schedule.

Program Preference by Default

In a January 1972 public opinion poll, over one-quarter of the persons questioned said that there were no programs that particularly interested them. Of the entertainment fare, 17.8 percent were interested in the dramatic series 'mystery shows', 9.8 percent enjoyed the full-length feature films, and 7.4 percent preferred the pure entertainment programs.[23] The fact that there was such great indifference to the programs offered, seemed to indicate that regardless of the materials, many viewers would be dissatisfied.

The ongoing viewing surveys presented those in charge of television program selection with audience preference and interest information, albeit, slightly outdated. Yet the information may not have been based on program popularity, per se, but on the fact that the audience had little else to choose from in the form of inexpensive entertainment alternatives.

With just one channel, the only television competition came from Arabic-language programs, coming across Israel's borders. Among other internal entertainment outlets, radio could not match television's far larger audiences, and attendance at the cinema constantly dropped during the first five years of television, for as ticket prices were raised, free television grew even more attractive. Nathan Cohen, Legal Advisor to the IBA, spoke about the power of television over the cinema, and how it 'would cut down the audience, like it cut down the audience in coffee houses. It changes every way of life.'[24]

For many, television became a 'going out' activity, and a 1970 survey based on 4,000 personal interviews of Jewish adults over eighteen years of age, indicated that while six in ten felt 'television is less interesting than they expected,' that 'very few people are willing to lose out on any amount of television viewing time.'[25]

Thus, general television entertainment programming, which occupied a large portion of all broadcast time, did not necessarily earn its audience by the quality and the content of the offerings. The acquired programs, especially the American-produced fare, may have held their esteemed preference ratings, not because of what they offered, but simply because they occupied the best time slots on the right

viewing evenings. In that 1970 survey, 33 percent of the interviewees stated that they wanted more Israeli programs, while only 15 percent wanted more acquired fare. Although this appeared to indicate that there was a demand for more home-produced, indigenous materials, another 28 percent were content to have programming remain as it was, and 24 percent offered no opinion.[26]

Israeli audiences and their preferences proved to be as much of an anathema to those involved with program selection, as did the plethora of internal frustrations which included inadequate budgets, limited facilities, and only one channel with which to please all of the viewers in just four hours at night. While the ongoing surveys provided some insight into what appealed to the television audiences, they alone could not provide the definitive barometer for program selection.

## Conclusions

Although audience preference ratings were taken on a fairly regular basis during the first five years, the combination of the Israeli audience's hunger for any kind of programming and the limitations of a single channel would have artificially boosted the ratings of whatever program appeared. As long as a program was not too obtuse in its content and form, it could have garnered a decent rating just because it was on the screen at a reasonable time.

Once many Israelis had acquired expensive television receivers and had paid their annual license fee, they were not discretionary viewers. With no other choice except for Arabic broadcasts from 'enemy' countries, Israelis either watched whatever was available on their own system, or did not watch at all. During the early years, when television was a novelty, viewers in Israel, like viewers in any new system, were fascinated by whatever fare was presented. Although complaints were voiced on the quality and content of some programs, and ratings dipped for those special interest programs which did not attract a large audience, most Israelis accepted the new medium as a convenient, inexpensive form of entertainment and escape.

The unreasonable amount of attention given to television by the viewing audience, the population as a whole, and the other media, caused real or imagined pressure to be exerted on those within the medium to expand and fill the viewing schedule, with whatever materials which were available.

During the first five years, although one Israeli-produced entertainment program was the most popular overall, the audience preferences were heavily weighted for American and British-produced entertainment shows in general, and for dramatic series presentations in particular.

For some of the acquired programs which drew lower ratings, the results could be attributed to the plot, characters, content, or a poor time slot placement. In some instances, the American programs presented situations and locations which were totally alien to the experiences of the Israeli audience, which may have been difficult to relate to. Yet, other programs with unusual plots and settings, such as the two dramatic series of 'Hawaii Five-O' and 'Ironside', were extremely popular, perhaps because of their characteristics, or because they provided continuous escapist action.

With no absolute consistency of audience reactions, it was a difficult matter for those in television to select, present and maintain a program schedule which would satisfy a majority of the television audience. The use of surveys helped, but into the fifth year of regularly scheduled programming, television was still searching for a better way to present a multiplicity of acceptable programming to a large and diverse audience -- and to do so on one channel which operated, in total, for just four hours a night.

NOTES

1 Broadcasting Authority Law, 5725-1965, State of Israel, Chapter One: Basic Provisions, Secrion 3., (1) - (5).

2 Interview with Itzhauk Shimoni, Jerusalem, Israel, 22 April 1975.

3 Interview with Yeshayahu Tadmor, Jerusalem, Israel, 14 April 1975.

4 Statistics on Radio and Television 1960-1976, No. 23, Division of Statistics on Culture and Communication, Office of Statistics, (Paris: Unesco, 1978), p. 54.

5 'Percentage of Families Possessing Durable Goods, by Type of Settlement (1973)', Table xi/26. Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1974, No. 25. (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974), p. 292.

6 'Jewish Families Possessing Durable Goods, by Continent of Birth and Period of Immigration of Family Head,' Table xi/22, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1974, No. 25. (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974), p. 290.

7 'Television Watching Among the Jewish Population Aged 14 and Over by Sex and Age,' Table S/45. Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1969, No. 20. (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1969), p. 586.

8 Interview with Michal Caspi, Jerusalem, Israel, 3 June 1975.

9 'Jewish Population Aged 14 and Over, by Television Watching Time, and by Sex and Age,' Table T/34, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1971, No. 22. (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1971), p. 572.

10 'Television Viewers Aged 14 and Over (Jews),' Table xxv/2. Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1973, No. 24. (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1973), p. 681.

11 Interview with Walter Eytan, Jerusalem, Israel, 6 May 1975.

12 Interview with Arnon Zuckerman, Jerusalem, Israel, 7 May 1975 and 23 August 1976.

13 Interview with Ari Avnerre, Jerusalem, Israel, 21 April 1975.

[14] Sir Hugh Greene, Report to Yigal Allon, 1 June 1973, p. 8.

[15] Interview with Shmuel Almog, Jerusalem, Israel, 24 April 1975.

[16] Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows, 1946-Present (New York: Ballentine Books, 1979), p. 191.

[17] Ibid., p. 35.

[18] Ibid., p. 317.

[19] Ibid., p. 83.

[20] Ibid., p. 475.

[21] 'Change on the Kibbutz', Time, 6 November 1972, p. 78.

[22] Interview with Haggai Pinsker, Jerusalem, Israel, 9 April 1975.

[23] 'Indifference to TV Shows', Jerusalem Post, 5 January 1972, p. 6.

[24] Interview with Nathan Cohen, Jerusalem, Israel, 4 May 1975.

[25] Elihu Katz and Michael Gurevitch, The Secularization of Leisure (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1976), p. 161.

[26] Ibid., p. 166.